

(All) Men

by Jack CJ Stark

After pa left
Ma made it very clear
all men are bastards

It was the house motto
echoed throughout the memories of my childhood
said loud and proud and often
And it was okay
because I was a boy
so I wasn't a bastard

Now, I am a man
(at least in part)
Squatting in a room with black furry walls
Rationing the scraps I stole
Alone
Covering reflections
to hide the black and blue
to hide eye contact
Popping pills
to ease the pain
from the self beatings
Resisting carving new creases in flesh
to dull the voice
that tells me today should be my last

Aware I am bereft of any worth
unable to contribute
deserving nothing else than misery

I lie awake
whilst the world around me sleeps
knowing it is okay
knowing all is right
because I am a man
and (all) men are bastards